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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6429  
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0276  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7257  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5364  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3899  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1184  
RUEHNW/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3970  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1166  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3056  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7850  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5505  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0306  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2196  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS AND PM  
MCC FOR D NASSIRY AND E BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PHUM MOPS CE

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: MILITARY TAKES LAST REMAINING LTTE  
STRONGHOLD IN THE EAST

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, James R. Moore, for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) On July 11 military spokesman Prasad Samarasinghe announced that the military had taken Baron's Cap, the last remaining high point in Thoppigala, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) last stronghold in the East. Later that evening, LTTE defense spokesman Irasiah Illanthirayan issued a statement acknowledging the loss of Thoppigala and the rest of the LTTE's eastern strongholds but warning that the results will be different if the military attempts to invade Tiger-controlled territory in the North. For nearly two months prior, the military had announced that the fall of Thoppigala was "imminent" as it took control of the territory piece-by-piece. The number of these announcements led to skepticism, particularly within the media, about the military's real progress. However, on July 8 Embassy interlocutors informed us that dozens of LTTE cadres, including many suspected to be Tiger leaders, were seen abandoning Thoppigala and moving towards LTTE-controlled territory in the North.

¶2. (SBU) The clearing of Thoppigala is the latest effort in the Sri Lanka military's campaign since April 2006 to drive the LTTE out of its strongholds in the East. The Tigers were deeply embedded in all of the major cities along the Eastern seaboard, with some estimates placing as much as 80 percent of Batticaloa District under Tiger control. As a result, the fighting was intense and lasted much longer than the military had anticipated. By the end of May 2007, however, the military had captured all of the Tigers' bases of operation, with the exception of Thoppigala, approximately 15 kilometers west of Batticaloa.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: The fall of Thoppigala could have significant political ramifications for the Rajapaksa administration. In recent weeks even hard-line Sinhalese nationalist parties like the JVP have become increasingly

critical of the administration. Although the military's incessant announcements that the fall of Thoppigala was "imminent" were viewed with skepticism, its eventual success should provide the Rajapaksa administration with a political victory with which it can temporarily rally its supporters and quiet its detractors. However, even the GSL's official web portal cautioned that the fall of Thoppigala should not be equated with the elimination of Tiger cadres from the East. The Tigers are almost surely planning to create havoc in the East, and if they strike soon, they may cut short the afterglow of the military's victory and Rajapaksa's reprieve from political dissension.

MOORE